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If the state regulates marriage at all, it must decide what marriage is. The real debate, then, is not whether moral views should be codified into our laws, but which moral views we should adopt.

Put simply, marriage is by definition the union of one man and one woman. Most of us share the intuition that there is something exclusive about marriage, and that men and women were uniquely designed as complements for each other.

If persons in non-marital relationships want to obtain legal benefits, they may do so through private legal arrangements. But our state should not publicly sanction as marriage or marriage-like, those relationships that do not constitute a marriage.

Many have argued that amending the Wisconsin Constitution is unnecessary because our laws already reflect the traditional definition of marriage. But the laws in Massachusetts, California, New York and Washington also reflected this before courts in those states struck down their marriage laws (suits in the latter three are pending appeal).

The undeniable reality is, those who advocate changing marriage are now turning to receptive state courts to impose their moral preferences. And with the Wisconsin Supreme Court leaning left, we are surely on their radar screen.

We are a nation deeply divided over how the state ought to treat homosexual relationships. Slogans such as "civil rights" and "equal protection" unhelpfully beg the question. Neither is name calling a constructive way to debate this ("hateful" and "homophobic" are current favorites by the other side).

The rules of the game should be that whoever can convince more of her fellow citizens wins.

By placing the proposed amendment before the people in November 2006, we ensure that we all play by the same rules and foreclose the option of having four robed lawyers in Madison decide this important issue for us.